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THE DISPOSITION OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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Permanent and universal peace, for which the world yearns and today travails in agony, can only come with permanent and universal righteousness. The vexed questions of the hour can only reach a final settlement as they are settled in justice. The issues involved in Constantinople and its disposition are difficult. So far, in modern history, they have been insuperable, because they are involved in a larger issue which no nation, large or small, has yet been willing to face on any one definite principle, framed in justice and applied with impartiality. The question of Constantinople is not, fundamentally, the disposition of a city, but the disposition of two waterways connecting open seas.

On the open seas, the nations are agreed in demanding an equal freedom and equal security for neutrals, or were until the use of the submarine and the new application of the old doctrine of the continuous voyage, one by Germany and the other by Great Britain, have raised disputed questions. In peace and in war, however, international law and the nations are agreed on the general principle and constant policy which makes the open sea free to all, open to all, and protected by all, though the major share of their protection has been extended by the English and American navies. English justice has, to take modern times, hung more pirates than all the rest of the world put together. American courts come next. Both navies have together cleared the seas of piracy, and of claims like that of Spain to broad realms in the Spanish main. The ships of all lands have profited by their work.

On straits and ways from sea to sea, the world has no such agreements and no common concern or uniform principle. Once all straits were owned and held at a price for passage. Denmark claimed the Skagerack, and England the Channel with an assertion of supremacy over all the Seven Seas about the British Isles. Even a century ago, Barbary pirates held the Straits of Gibraltar, the heirs of long generations of ocean pirates from the red-flagged Phoenician traders 3,000 years ago, carrying on sail and prow the open

hand of Astarte. Her emblem survived to our own recent day in the marauding flags of the Mediterranean. It had its final western legacy in the death's head of the "Jolly Roger," for the mark of the Semitic goddess guarded both the dead and the living.

The Barbary pirate is gone after centuries in which his ravages were early recorded on Latin inscriptions on Spanish coasts and in Spanish towns in the days of the Antonines, and in the records of our own sea-faring churches on Cape Cod, and the New England coast at the close of the eighteenth century. The Dane no longer demands Danegeld and the English Channel had become as free as the oceans and seas about, until the submarine came to make or to mar international law as the wages of battle may at last decide. The control of the straits will remain undecided, and the peace of the waters will be limited and strained by their work and put to naught at every channel from sea to sea or from ocean to ocean, until the wise rule and principle is adopted that straits, natural or artificial, connecting seas must be as free to peaceful trade as the seas they join and as forefended to belligerents as any neutral ocean waters.

This principle will be a shock to many, particularly to the two nations, England and America, who first asserted and created the peace of the seas from Drake to Decatur and have, at the cost of more than one war, asserted neutral rights on the high seas in the presence of belligerent flags. None the less, to the principle that straits and connecting waterways should be free as the seas to the world's mercantile marine, and no more closed to belligerent flags than neutral harbors, the world's practice steadily tends. The Ottoman Empire, it is often forgotten, adopted this principle and practice when European governments were asserting proprietary rights over every strait and channel which joined the world's wide waters from sea to ocean. Before the end of the seventeenth century, the Sublime Porte laid down the doctrine that the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus should always be open to the merchantmen of all countries and always closed to the man-of-war of all ensigns. English, French and Russian mercantile flags were flapping and turning as the vessels that carried them were tacking in the narrow beats of these straits at the very time when the naval ensigns of these three lands were wiping out the last strong fleet of the Sultan in 1827 at Navarino, when the French were depriving the Ottoman

Empire of the territorial rights in Algeria and Russia crushing the last remnant of the Turkish fleet in Sinope in 1852, and so on, up and down in a period of three centuries, this immunity for mercantile flags survived in the Dardanelles and Bosphorus wide-spread hostilities, until these acts led to a declaration of war. At this, as at many other points of international practice, the Sublime Porte under a long succession of Sultans, in its days of triumph and of defeat from Mohammed the Conqueror (El Ghazi) to Mohammed V, in the twentieth century, has shown a forbearance, a wise tolerance, a readiness to give all creeds protection to which the lamentable and cruel massacres of one period and another, including our own, should not lead us to be blind in surveying the past or foreseeing the future.

This ancient principle was affirmed by England in the treaty negotiated by the dauntless Stratford de Radcliffe. Still in early manhood, in 1809, it was repeated by England, Austria and Prussia in the treaty of 1840, and France agreed to it in 1841. The wisdom of this practice was affirmed at every stage of this question in the Congress of Paris in 1856, the Convention of London in 1870, and in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. At every stage since, up to the present war, this has been the accepted doctrine. But in war it has always silently disappeared as in the past. The freedom of straits has never anywhere rested on the same basis as the freedom of the seas.

The freedom of the seas has been secured, because there the interests of all states are equal. The freedom of straits has not been secured because in them, the interests of states are not equal. Each country has followed its self-interest. The world's leading straits are in the hands of England and America. England holds the two gates of the Mediterranean, Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. The United States holds the Panama Canal. Each country has talked the neutrality of other straits and acted and enacted control of its own. Gibraltar was seized July 24, 1704, by a *coup de main* when England had not declared war on Spain, though hostilities over the Spanish succession had begun in Flanders with France. The attacking fleet was English and Dutch, but Admiral Sir George Rooke hoisted the English flag above the Rock and there it has been ever since, controlling the navigation of the straits, never more completely than today. The Suez Canal began neutral in

peace and in war, belligerent ships being excluded. Arabi Pasha took these pledges at their face value and lost Egypt to the Egyptians, whose labor built the canal. The Sublime Porte tried to apply to it the "ancient principle," which had guided the policy of the Ottoman Empire in the two water-ways indispensable to the safety of the Turkish capital; but the first breath of war destroyed guaranties signed and sealed, not on one but several "scraps of paper."

The Panama Canal began neutral. It is today under the complete control of the United States. No administration will permit any other disposition in the present posture of the world's governance. It is fortified. It will be defended against all comers. All vessels pay the same dues but they are not under the same rights and they never will be, while international rights have no protection by land or by sea but force.

England and the United States have each an immediate and direct interest—one in Gibraltar and Suez, and the other in Panama, greater than any other land, one by its tonnage, and Indian empire, and the other by its territory, its trade and its twin coasts connected by the rift in the American Isthmus. Each is powerful enough to enforce this right against all comers. Neither will yield either strait. But as long as these straits are so held, no country dependent on a strait will be satisfied or can be satisfied by any control, short of that which broods an ever present power, at Gibraltar, Suez, and Panama. The instant that power weakens, some other flag will fly over each strait.

Unfortunately, instead of being early claimed by one strong power with special and particular rights, the Dardanelles and Bosphorus are equally needed by two strong powers and are necessary to the very existence of the empire which has so long held them. Neither Russia nor the Teuton alliance can treat as negligible the control of these straits. If the Mississippi flowed not into a gulf, but a closed sea, whose exits were the Panama Canal into the Pacific, and the Windward Passage into the Atlantic, we would never trust the key of either in the hands of any power, weak or strong. The straits which separate Europe and Asia are the real mouths of the Danube on one side, and on the other of the Dneiper, the Don and the Volga, connected with the Don by the canal from Kamgskin to Rasponiskata.

If Turkey has remained in its present control of this access to the mouths of these streams, through the Black Sea, it is because neither Russia nor its Teuton neighbors were strong enough to seize these straits against United Europe. They cannot today. Neither will ever be satisfied with the other.

These two powers are evenly matched as to each other. They have the same conflict as to landways as to waterways. Neither Russia nor the Teutonic powers can leave the control of the one practicable railroad across the Balkans from Belgrade to Salonica to chance. They can no more permit a weak power like Serbia to control one end of this rail route to the Aegean, to the Suez Canal, and to the world's commerce, or another weak power like Greece to control the other end at Salonica, any more than we could permit a weak power like Venezuela to hold the key to our ocean door. No strong power can safely permit this, if it can help itself, and no strong power will if it can do better, as witness the eligible vantage sites occupied by England.

The question of Constantinople is really the question, therefore, not of an ancient city or even of an imperial capital. It is the question of adjusting and securing freedom of access for a population of 260,000,000 in the Teutonic Alliance, Russia and the Balkan States by railroad lines and two straits, to the Mediterranean and the commerce of the world.

The states in our Union are by every possible measure far more homogeneous than the group of lands, tongues and races which need and must have free impartial passage over these lands and water-ways to the South. But for the general authority over foreign and interstate commerce by land and water possessed by the federal government, our own states would have plundered each other whenever one of them had control of any eligible land or water route. New York and New Jersey both levied tribute on passenger and freight traffic two generations ago, one by the head tax on the Camden and Amboy, and the other by rates on the Erie Canal, rates which paid off the capital cost of the water-way in about 40 years, with interest.

Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Balkan States cannot possibly trust each other with the control of these great arteries of commerce summed in the Constantinople question. It is today impracticable to create any joint authority to regulate interstate

commerce in this area, though the Danube Commission is a step in this direction, and the treaty agreements as to the Balkan railways another. It was a difficult task for us to provide in our constitution for the distant regulation of commerce for a people, speaking one tongue, and a majority of one common origin. The solution of such a problem in East Europe has been beyond the political possibilities of the present and probably of the future. The Republic of Russia might accomplish this, if it dealt with republics in Germany, Austria and Hungary, but even Russia has only taken the first stage in the new Pilgrim's Progress to democracy, and the Slough of Despond may not be distant.

Were all the lands involved republics, a federation might come. In democracy, and in democracy alone lies the peaceful solution of the contentious problems of international affairs. What imperial governments at Berlin, Vienna, and Petrogad could never accomplish and could never be trusted to control or accomplish by the smaller kingdoms of the Balkans, could be done by federated states, with no ambition for conquest, and no motive for annexation. If the Germanic States were once united in a Federation of Germany in which the Prussian conquests of the past century recovered the autonomy once enjoyed by the Hanover and the rest; if the Slav and non-Slav States of the Balkans were federated, if the old integers of rapacious Russian conquest reappeared in a federated republic, these peaceful federations, German, Russian, Central Slav, South Slav and non-Slav, from Hungary to the Ottoman Republic, could control and regulate these landways and waterways, their railroads and the twin straits, on common and mutual principles protecting the commerce and safety of all. Today, this seems a mere dream; but it is both more probable and more possible than before the events of the past three years. Empires can never be trusted. Federated republics by their nature and organization are peaceful and loyal. At all events the inevitable choice is between one great "Central Europe," dominating all between the Baltic and the North Sea, and the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and a group of federated self-governing lands.